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ABSTRACT

This guide, which is intended for adults in the United Kingdom, contains information about the educational and employment opportunities available to them. The following topics are discussed in the guide's 11 sections: assessing one's own learning skills and identifying available learning opportunities; locating sources of educational and career guidance (career services, training enterprise councils, local enterprise councils, helplines, and computer software); assessing existing skills and educational and career goals; deciding how and where to learn (library programs, volunteer programs, further education and tertiary colleges, adult residential colleges, open universities, distance learning, employee development schemes); locating learning opportunities for unemployed individuals (adult training for work, programs for ex-offenders, programs for disabled adults, services for single parents, tips on job hunting); understanding the qualification system (National Vocational Qualifications, Scottish Vocational Qualifications; General National Vocational Qualifications, awarding bodies); and learning in Europe (study holidays, courses based at United Kingdom universities, courses at European universities); and funding education and training (awards, student loans, career development loans, tax relief, funds for study in Europe); and identifying ways of working (part-time working, flexible working, time-term working, job sharing, career breaks); and opting for self-employment. Numerous checklists and case studies of adult students are included throughout the guide. (MN)

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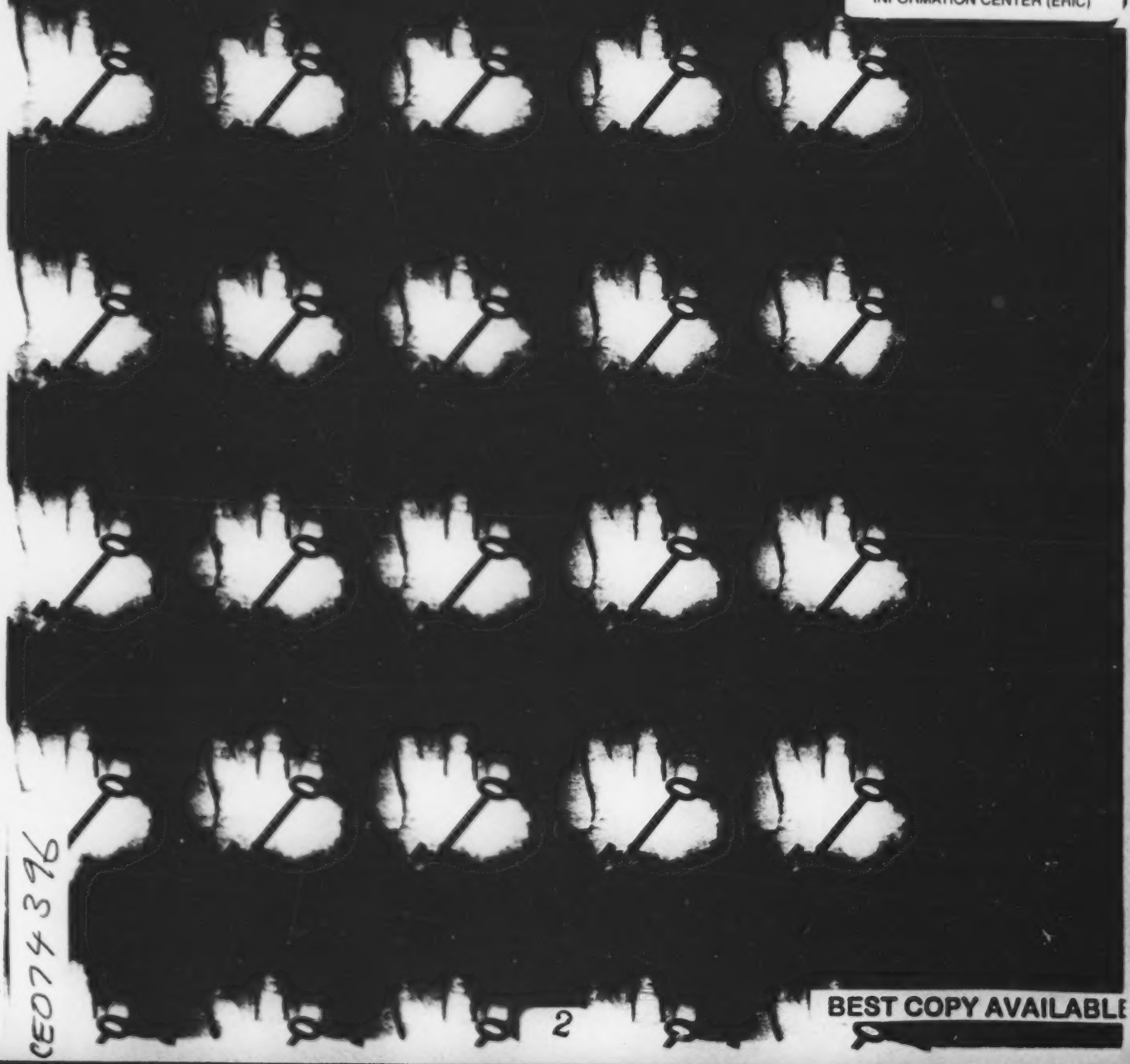

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So WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

PLEASED?
PETRIFIED?
NEVER FEAR

You can do it!

LEARNING IS AN INVESTMENT

in your future

GO ON – UNLOCK A

brighter future!

Here's your chance to find out about all kinds of new ideas and opportunities for **Adult Learners**.

There's plenty going on all over the country – and you can be sure that there's a learning opportunity especially to suit **you**.

Pleased? Petrified?! Never fear! You can do it!

Plenty of people swore they'd never touch learning again after bad experiences at school. Many more have found that once they've tasted learning the second time around, they want more.

Whatever your reaction, read through this booklet and you'll see that **learning can help you sort out your life!**

Learning isn't something you only do when you're young and at school. School (and, if you continue, your college or university) gives you the basics. But in today's competitive world you need more. Not only that – just think of the pat on the back you'll be able to give yourself when you find that you can do it too!

Think of how much change there's been in the world of work during your lifetime. And how much more there'll be. Jobs move on. Your skills and experience need to keep pace. That's where learning comes in. It can help you update your skills right through your working life – and keep you in demand in the job market.

There's hardly a corner of the working world that hasn't been touched by information technology – IT. It's easy to dismiss it as something for the young. But you're never too old to learn. And if school and you didn't hit it off when you were young, just remember that IT is one thing you **never** failed at – it wasn't around, for a start!

Nor need learning relate just to work and jobs. There are plenty of courses nowadays which will let you learn a new hobby or skill – such as car maintenance, painting or creative writing.

Learning's not like it used to be in the old days, braving a barrage of questions in a crammed classroom. It's much more relaxed. And you don't have to take a trip to college to learn. Now you can learn anywhere you choose – at your place of work or at home, with familiar faces around you.

Across the UK people are getting together to build learning communities, where everyone can feel the benefit. Now's **your** chance to find out what's going on around you.

More than ever before, learning is something we **all** need to do – throughout life – and it has positive benefits on your health. It's aerobics for the mind. It keeps you fresh, young and interesting. It helps you stay ahead. What other products can make those claims?!

Learning is an investment in your own future.

So no matter whether you're in work, out of work, or returning to work – have time on your hands. Have ambitions in your head. Thinking about education, training or employment. Learning could prove the key to a brighter future. **So read on!**

You may have caught some of the recent radio or TV items about Adult Learning. This booklet will tell you more. And invite you to share in the good times other people have had when they took a chance – and took a course!

Go on – unlock a brighter future!

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Having SECOND THOUGHTS?

In this brochure we have set out to show that education and training has something to offer everyone. If you're having second thoughts look at the checklist below and tick the sentences that apply to you. Follow this up by turning to the appropriate pages and finding the solution to your doubts.

BARRIER	TICK BOX IF THIS APPLIES	RESPONSE	SEE PAGE
I'm hopeless when it comes to learning		Nowadays, there's more on offer and you're bound to find a way of learning that suits you	41
I can't afford it		People who are unwaged or on a low income may get special rates. Some courses are free.	44
I should be looking for a job		Education or training can improve your chances of finding work	29
My partner says it's a waste of time – and what about the kids?		This can be a problem – but no learning is really a waste of time, and many courses now have creches or nurseries	15
I'd feel stupid sitting in a classroom full of school children		It's not like that! There are lots of ways of learning, and many of them don't involve sitting in class	41
My memory is awful		You're not alone – remember, learning is about understanding things, not just memorising them	15
I've got no confidence		A short course in assertiveness or confidence building can really help	11
I can't commit myself to regular hours – it wouldn't fit in		There are lots of opportunities using Open Learning or flexi-study	41
Reading and writing are not my strong points		That needn't stop you finding something suitable. A Basic Skills course might be a good starting point	15
I'm just too far behind the times		All the more reason to go for education... so you can change that if you want to	11

Help! Where DO YOU BEGIN?

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Help! Where DO YOU BEGIN?

If we were to list here every opportunity there is around the country for you to brush up on your learning, this booklet would be thicker than a telephone directory!

The fact is, you could do **anything**!

First look at yourself, your wants and your needs. And then take it from there.

It's easier than you think

How to work it out

Deciding **what** you want to do – can be daunting in itself.

Some things are likely to suggest themselves immediately. Maybe you've decided that a word processing course could revolutionise your life. Perhaps you want to learn German, to communicate on holiday – or with visitors here.

Maybe you want to understand how computers work – as a step into a new job, so that you can run your household accounts or keep up with the younger generation. Or do you have a secret longing to learn line dancing or crack that car maintenance manual?

IF YOU'VE THOUGHT ALONG THOSE LINES ALREADY, YOU'RE NOT A MILLION MILES AWAY FROM TAKING THAT NEXT STEP AND FINDING A COURSE THAT WILL GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT.

A LITTLE LEARNING – WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

All kinds of people all over the country are finding that a little learning is changing their life. Taking a course of study – whatever the subject (and that really does mean everything from ballroom dancing to abseiling, Italian to keyboard skills) – can work wonders.

It can:

- broaden your mind
- increase your confidence
- improve the way you feel about yourself
- change the way others see you
- improve your job prospects
- enrich your life
- make you a more interesting person

WHY NOT GIVE IT A TRY?

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But if you have no idea at all which way to go, follow this easy guide ...

Step 1 Write down any qualifications you have already – not only those you got at school or college but also anything else you've collected over the years from work or social activities; for example, that Health and Safety or First Aid certificate, a National Vocational Qualification, your map reading badge in the Scouts, a certificate for playing the piano – or an employee commendation at work.

Step 2 Write down the skills you've developed over the years – like dealing with people, organising your money, planning a holiday, working out a balanced diet, bringing up a family, involvement in voluntary work or the local community. Anything and everything should go down here! It will help you sort out what you want to do later on.

Step 3 Write down all the things that interest you. Not just hobbies – include here the type of programmes you like watching on TV, such as gardening, wildlife or thrillers. Add in the areas where you've found yourself thinking "How does that work?" Or "Why do they do that?" Note down any ambitions you have – or any skills you want, or need, to develop. Not just your wildest, unreachable dreams such as becoming a brain surgeon or a movie star (although once you start learning, who knows where it may lead?!), but anything from learning to type to rebuilding your kitchen cabinets. What about developing a new skill or gaining a different qualification that could lead you into employment in a new field? There are no limits. Just write them all down.

Step 4 Look over what you've written. You should be able to build up a picture of the kind of things that interest you. Then work out what gaps in your knowledge you want to fill so your life can move on the way you want it to. For instance, a joinery course would help you rework your kitchen. An IT course could help you compete in today's job market.

Remember – IT'S EASIER THAN YOU THINK!

The Skills of Learning

Set out below are some skills that help us to learn.

Are there others that you think are important?

OBSERVING
using your senses – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and feeling – to collect information

QUESTIONING
keeping an open mind and looking out for new and better ways to do things

TAKING ACTION
acting on decisions

CHOOSING
selecting between different approaches to solving problems

SOLVING PROBLEMS
combining information, experience and skills to help work out solutions to problems

ANALYSING PROBLEMS
working out what causes problems and how you can solve them

LOOKING FORWARD
using your experience of the past to work out what might happen in the future

CONNECTING
making connections between things

SUMMARISING
selecting the most important bits of knowledge and experience

MEMORISING
storing information and experiences in your mind for future use

FINDING INFORMATION
by asking questions, looking in books, watching TV, reading the papers

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Where TO FIND HELP?

JUST ASK THE PROFESSIONALS!

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Where TO FIND HELP?

JUST ASK THE PROFESSIONALS!

There's a vast range of opportunities to help you develop your skills and interests. There's bound to be something that you want to do – but what?

It can be difficult to know where to start. If you think you need some help with deciding what you want to do, there's plenty around in your own area.

Careers Advisers are used to helping people think through their wants and needs. And they know their way around the information maze. They'll talk things over with you and together you can set some targets to aim for and make an action plan. That way you'll be able to take your next steps steadily and be more sure of reaching your goals.

How do you find them?

Get in touch with the local Careers Service – they often offer a service to adults. Contact Adult Guidance Centres, Community Centres or schools and colleges. Browse through your public library. And contact your nearest Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) or Local Enterprise Company (LEC) in Scotland – they'll have local information. Look in the phone book for their details.

Scan the local paper for information about education roadshows or open evenings at colleges and community centres. And don't forget that talking to friends, family and colleagues can spark off useful leads.

Careers Services

Careers Services often have local names around the country, you should still find them listed in the telephone book under careers service.

As well as providing free careers advice to young people, you'll find that many careers services have an advisory service for adults too, although you may be asked to pay for some services.

And all offices, wherever they are, have a range of information available about education and training opportunities as well as jobs and careers.

Although you'll usually need to make an appointment if you want to talk through your education and training plans, there's nothing to stop you calling in and browsing round their library.

Rhonda Murray got married at 17 and started a family. At 25 she found herself single again, with two small children to bring up.

Following five years of drifting I decided to do something constructive. I regretted not taking any exams at school and enrolled in a 'Make Your Experience Count' course run by the Workers Education Association (WEA). During it I was asked if I'd like to have a go at tutoring it myself.

The course is a ten-week self-development programme for adults who want to make a change in their lives. It's designed by the Open University and accredited by the Open College Network. At just two hours a week it's easy to fit in around other commitments.

It's very much a motivating course. There's a series of exercises through which you gradually build up a portfolio. The programme starts with a self-reflection exercise, where you look at what makes you who you are. Then we build up a picture of how we see ourselves now and where we're aiming to be in a year's time. It's a way of focusing people's ideas when they want to make a change in their life.

We look at life experiences and how to learn from them and we examine prejudices and what makes you feel good about yourself. After a goal-setting exercise, there are optional sessions chosen by the students on topics such as coping with stress, assertiveness, time management, looking for a job, presenting yourself, a visit to the careers centre and CV compilation. By now people know where they want to make changes, so the final session involves compiling an Action Plan.

An external moderator looks at students' portfolios and provided there is sufficient evidence of self development they are awarded Level 1 Open College Network (OCN) certificates. It's helped me in my personal development - now my children are getting older I've got a chance to think about what I want. I've recently acquired my City & Guilds certificate in Counselling and I'm currently at college studying for a Further and Adult Education Teachers Certificate.

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You'll find your local careers service listed in the phone book – or ask at your local library.

Why not give them a ring and see how they can help? In Northern Ireland, ring EGSA, the Educational Guidance Service for Adults on their HELPLINE 01232 244274, during office hours.

Your local council

Your local council may be able to help. All local authorities which run schools also have a responsibility for opportunities for adults. So your county or city council should be able to tell you where to find out about courses on offer locally. Ask for the Adult or Community Education Section, or call your local Further Education Colleges.

TECs and LECs – what can they do for you?

You may have seen local advertisements for Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs). They're independent bodies led by local business people in partnership with the public and voluntary sectors. Their main aim is to support economic growth and prosperity.

There are no TECs or LECs in Northern Ireland – the Training and Employment Agency is responsible for training and enterprise schemes there.

TECs and LECs are a useful first port of call in your area for information on where to get training advice. They give information and advice on training both for adults and young people, plus advice on setting up your own business.

Training

TECs and LECs are responsible for government training programmes for people who are unemployed or who want to return to work after a break. You may have heard of some of the schemes they run, such as Training for Work, youth training, Modern Apprenticeships and Business Start Up.(Read more about these later in this booklet.)

Call them and see what they can do for you.

Advice and guidance

Most TECs also run a service especially geared to adults who want advice about careers, education, training or employment. Sometimes there are 'high street shops' set up to give information and advice on training and learning opportunities. Some regions have information buses which tour rural areas or housing estates.

The Learning Line

From September 1997 a national helpline will be available called the Learning Line. It will be open to all adults in England. The Learning Line will:

- be free, provide advice and guidance;
- be impartial and confidential;
- signpost callers on to services such as detailed local guidance, or directly to an education or training provider;
- provide advice on job hunting (although not on specific vacancies);
- offer advice on childcare related to learning opportunities;
- give information on paying for learning;
- make provision for those with a hearing impairment by offering the service via a minicom; and
- be available outside the normal working day for those who are employed.

Look out for publicity on 'Learning Line', on TV and in the

Sue Hunt is Secretary of the local village hall – and she'd be lost without her computer.

'I use it for address labels, accounts, agendas, AGM notices, bills (for parish meetings, badminton club, dancing class and dog training), letters, and typing up minutes of meetings. In the computer memory there's a list of houses in the village – each committee member sells tickets to a segment when we have a function. I've even got a monthly chart for the village hall cleaner to let her know what's planned. And it's all available at the press of a key!'

Sue learned her skills on RSA CLAIT courses (Computer Literacy and Information Technology) at the local further education college – and she's never looked back.

'I was apprehensive about going back to learning after such a long break – I didn't want to show myself up. Nor did I want to appear unable to understand it in front of the friends I went with! So it was very satisfying to find that I could do it after all – with ease. It's an invaluable skill to have. I just couldn't do without it now.'

Tap into useful information on computer

There's a variety of computer programmes around to help you make choices about courses and careers.

And they're simple to use!

TAPs – Training Access Points – provide information on local training and education opportunities, on an easy-to-use computer. They'll tell you what's available at college locally or through private training providers. You'll also be able to find out details such as times, methods of study and contact names.

Plan It is a new west of Scotland database which you can tap into to find out what's going on near you if you're looking for learning. Phone for information on 0800 838 122.

microDOORS is another computer package which helps you to look at different jobs and decide whether they're right for you.

COIC CareerBuilder links to microDOORS. It's like a quiz which helps you build up a picture of your own interests, preferences and aptitudes. Try it and have some fun!

ECCTIS 2000 helps you find out about university courses. It gives you quick and easy access to information on nearly 100,000 courses at over 700 universities and colleges in the UK. The computer asks you some simple questions to identify the type of course you want and then gives details of courses that fit the bill, how long they last, the method of study and contact names.

To find out more, contact: ECCTIS 2000, Oriel House, Oriel Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 1XP. Tel: 01242 252627.

Go along to your local college, careers office, adult guidance services or library and have a play! There's usually someone on hand to help if you get stuck. TECs, LECs, some supermarkets and community centres may also have them.

And don't worry – you can't break them or wipe off any vital information!

See Page 16 for more information on the BBC's 1997 IT campaign "Computers Don't Bite". It could be just the thing for getting you started in IT.

Computerised databases can't keep up with all locally-based courses – check with your council, community education service and voluntary organisations.

Ironstone Community Self Build was set up in 1988 by Claude Hendrickson, Randolph Morton and Trevor Carey to help others in their Chapeltown and Harehills community to develop skills and self reliance. They set themselves three goals: to make a success of building their own homes; to set up a construction company and to develop a training arm.

The group began by studying vocational courses leading to NVQs so that they could build their own houses. They moved on to take a NEBSM (National Examining Board in Supervisory Management) 'introductory course' which gave them the know-how and self confidence to set up their own company. They've now moved on to tackle the full NEBSM Certificate programme.

As Claude Hendrickson explains, it's a real success story and a fine example to others in the community.

"We see ourselves as positive role models for other black people, encouraging them to look at the construction industry as an employment possibility as well as stimulating future projects to happen in Leeds City itself.

"It's been an ambitious project. We've achieved our primary goal of building our own houses, are well advanced with our business start up and are now setting up links with Leeds College of Building as a training arm, run in partnership. Our members are involved in the Fast Tee project, acting as role models for youngsters from seven secondary schools locally. People aged 14+ come to the college half a day a week for their last two years at school, to learn the craft of building. By the end of their schooling, they are then in a position to make an informed career choice."

Claude's own education hasn't stood still. He's now completing a 'Make Your Experience Count' course before moving on to a BA degree in Community Development.

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What COULD YOU DO?

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What COULD YOU DO?

There are so many opportunities around nowadays that it's difficult to know where to start.

If you're thinking of higher education, you could opt for a degree. If you have no GCSEs or A levels already you could take an Access course to get you over that first hurdle – lots of people return to learning every year. There are all kinds of courses at both further and higher education level which would help you along the path to a better future.

If academic courses sound a bit daunting – or just not for you right now – then what about looking at the kinds of course that will teach you a new skill or hobby? Or broaden your horizons away from work.

You'll find literally hundreds of courses to choose from.

And once you start, you'll never want to stop!

There are courses that might lead you on to new ventures physically – such as hang-gliding, step classes, line dancing or Outward Bound. There are skills you can learn which could help you on a daily basis. Or lead to your own small business – such as painting or welding, computer design or cookery.

And there are courses which will give you specific knowledge such as self defence or first aid, lifesaving or health and safety, which you will be able to apply at work or home.

Education is often a way of developing a new work direction or improving your professionalism in your current role. It can provide a link into further study – and it can simply make you feel good about yourself and the world around you.

Nowadays there are plenty of options that will help you cope with the stresses of everyday life. Lie back and soak up the solutions!

FOR EXAMPLE, YOU COULD:

- take a gentle route into learning, brushing up on your basic skills or getting back into the swing of studying
- take a course that would lead to a qualification. Perhaps you'll use it to learn a particular skill to help you in work; such as word processing, business studies – or bricklaying.

What me? Do that?

When you've been out of learning for a while, you tend to think of yourself wearing a certain "hat" – mother, father, worker, cook. Whatever it is, we can all slip easily into a rut. And the longer we're in it, the deeper it becomes and the harder it is to climb out!

You may think learning's not for you. It might seem a long time since you got your head round something different.

But if you look at the skills you've gained since you left full-time education, you should realise that you're more skilled than you think!

Think back over the past few years to situations you've been in – and note down the skills you used and developed. You'll be surprised at how they mount up.

To help you on your way, just tick which you've done out of the boxes below and then list the skills that go with them.

- ☐ **met new people and made new friends**
- ☐ **brought up children (as nurse, teacher, adviser – and negotiator)**
- ☐ **managed your money**
- ☐ **arranged family outings**
- ☐ **bought a house and organised the move**
- ☐ **tackled household projects and crises**

The skills you've developed during your life are a useful grounding for any learning you might do now.

LEARNING NEVER STOPS – IT'S FOR LIFE.

YOU'LL BE AMAZED AT WHAT YOU COULD DO!

Learning about information technology (IT)

Information technology doesn't stand still – and never will. Examples of new technology spring up every day without us even noticing. Electronic mail is becoming a major method of communication. And you may have heard people talking about 'surfing the Net'.

Worried by technology? You needn't be!

Take a look around you. There are more computers and microchips than you realise – and they affect everyone's life. They're not just in home computers. Think about supermarket bar-code scanners, cash dispensers and video machines – all of them are the result of the development of the microchip.

At work, too, there are digital phones .... and a wealth of machinery driven by computer.

Computing will offer you more opportunities, not fewer. It unlocks new possibilities and opportunities and makes learning open to all.

Read 'The Multimedia Family'
It's available from:
Parents Information Network (PIN), PO Box 1577
London W7 3ZT

It's easy to find a course or advice on how to learn more. Now's the time to catch up – or just have a go.

Give yourself a head start – you'll be learning for the next millenium!

'Computers don't bite'

Are you doubtful about your ability to cope with computers, scared of looking foolish, or frightened of being left behind? Lacking in computer confidence? But don't know how to make things better?.

Then the BBC's Campaign on Information Technology is just for you. BBC Education for Adults is running this major campaign to make people more aware of Information Technology (IT). It's for anyone who wants to have a go at IT – perhaps to improve work opportunities or keep up with the children.

There are millions of people across Britain who have no contact with IT at all. Over the next two years the BBC aims to change all that through this campaign – and introduce several hundred thousand people to computer skills.

What's available

The BBC Education's campaign is linking with a network of organisations throughout the UK which will offer hands-on taster sessions to people who want to have a go at IT. You'll be able to try it out at places like shopping malls, pubs, libraries, colleges, universities, adult education centres, IT training centres and computer manufacturers.

You'll be seeing the free IT Helpline number **(0800 101 901)** on a series of 30-second spots on BBC1 and BBC2 TV. It's open from 12th May 7.30pm to 31st May and has information on where to find your IT taster session.

This campaign's a great opportunity to get to grips with IT. And it's especially for you!

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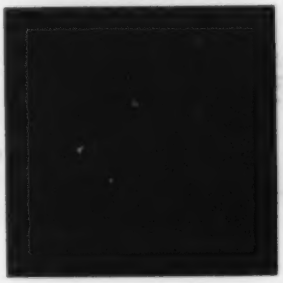

- ☐ Met new people and made new friends
- ☐ Brought up children (as nurse, teacher, adviser – and negotiator)
- ☐ Managed your money
- ☐ Arranged family outings
- ☐ Bought a house
- ☐ Tackled household projects – and crises!

The skills you've developed over the years are a useful grounding for any learning you might do now.

After all, throughout our lives, learning never stops!

FILL IN THE BOX THAT YOU THINK BEST DESCRIBES YOU THINKING ABOUT YOUR ANSWERS MAY HELP YOU CHOOSE	DEFINITELY TRUE	SOMETIMES TRUE	NOT VERY TRUE	NOT AT ALL TRUE
I like to learn things				
I learn things more easily when I work in a group				
I'm good at finding things out for myself				
I enjoy learning from experts				
I don't mind making mistakes				
I like to learn from books				
I like to learn by doing practical things				
I like getting information from TV and videos				
If it was left to me, I'd never learn anything				
I'm an observant sort of person				
I tend to notice connections between one thing and another				
I've got a good memory				
I enjoy showing other people how to do things				
I like to jot things down so I will remember them later				
I like to memorise facts				

Kate Arnold realised that if she wanted to keep up with her daughter, she needed to become computer literate.

'I was determined not to stay in the dark ages. My daughter uses a computer at university, so if I want to communicate with her I need to know what she's talking about! And when it comes to looking for a job, the ability to find your way around a computer is essential now. It's become a basic tool.'

The atmosphere on the course has proved a pleasant surprise.

'It's so relaxed. You have your own screen and work at your own pace, progressing through a manual – it's totally different from being in a traditional learning environment. When you first arrive, staff at the centre assure you that nothing you do to the computer will cause any major problems – you're encouraged to learn as you play. For the first couple of sessions, I was in confidence as you go. And if you can't remember elements from one session to the next, you can recap at will until you're sure of it.'

You gradually build up a portfolio of work, with the option of taking an exam after 14 weeks.

'It's totally without pressure – if you don't get it right, you can simply do it again. Even the most apprehensive of people would feel encouraged and at ease. It's unlike anything else I do. I actually look forward to going. Not only that, I know it's a means to an end which could transform my life.'

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How AND WHERE TO LEARN

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How AND WHERE TO LEARN

When you've thought about what you're going to learn, your next move is to work out **how** and **where** you want to learn.

There are many ways of learning. It doesn't have to be about sitting in a classroom with a teacher in front. It doesn't have to be a hurdle. You're likely to find it informal – and, most of all, something you'll enjoy!

Ways of learning

Tick the boxes that apply to you

Would you prefer to learn by yourself – perhaps working through a course at home when you've got some spare time?

Are there set times when you'd like to learn – such as evenings, weekends or school holidays?

Are you a 'people person' who would like to learn with a group of others?

Do you want to go out and meet new people?

Would you prefer to learn with a group of colleagues at work?

What about an outdoor course, like sailing or riding, driving lessons or outward bound?

All these options are available throughout the country, you just need to find the right learning place for you

WHERE ELSE TO LOOK FOR COURSES

Many clubs, museums, societies, voluntary organisations, arts groups and leisure centres run courses. And if a club's not already there, why not start one up?

Look out for:

- self help groups
- skills exchanges
- community action groups
- campaigns, festivals and societies

LOOK IN YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY OR CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU TO SEE WHAT'S AROUND

CASE STUDY

R. Harriman

Ray Harriman

Ray Harriman is a former steel worker. After being made redundant, he was unemployed on and off for eight years, a soul destroying time:

"I became involved in voluntary work to 'take up the slack' in my life and give me a focus. I'd gone along to a meeting to talk about improvements on the estate where I live and became involved in the formation of a Residents' Association. As I started to mix with people in authority I realised that they spoke a jargon that was completely foreign to me. I wanted to know what they knew. So I took an Institute of Housing course to bridge the communication gap, learning committee skills and so forth."

After that came a stint at the local further education college, which Ray really enjoyed:

"I hadn't done any education since school – it was terrifying at first! I didn't want to be made to look a total idiot. But in fact the majority of people were about my age. What amazed me most about adult education was the way you learn so much from each other's experiences. It's not about a classroom situation but rather about a group of people in conversation exploring issues together. And there are no barriers – anyone can do it. It's absolutely wonderful."

Ray subsequently became involved in a pilot project looking at the management of community groups, which gained him an Advanced RSA certificate. With financial help from the European Social Fund, he's studied for the City & Guilds Training the Trainers certificates, gained a Certificate of Education at University College, Stockton and is now working on his Teaching Diploma:

"Despite leaving school at 16 with no qualifications, I've found that I enjoy learning. By the time I finish this, because of the credit accumulation and transfer scheme, I'll have got a fair amount of credits towards a degree. I'm now Chair of the Hartlepool branch of the Workers Education Association, confident that I can understand the issues and speak the language. I can go along now and talk with people on an equal footing."

Where to learn

There are all kinds of courses – and all sorts of places where you can take them, including your own home! There are courses for older people and people who've been away from learning for some time. You'll also find courses especially for people who are unemployed.

Universities, adult education centres, community centres and some **sixth form colleges** offer a range of courses for adults. Some they run during the day. Others they put on in the evenings.

If you can't find the course you want, just ask. Contact colleges direct or look in your local library.

Back to school!

Some schools call themselves 'community schools' and welcome people from the community as well as their usual pupils. Usually you all learn together.

There's an enormous range of subjects:

• Work-Related • Educational • Leisure Activities • Hobbies

LIBRARIES

Don't forget libraries are a good source of learning information all have text books and some have training materials.

Volunteering is a great way to use your skills and experience – and to help others at the same time.

You stand to gain:

- new interests
- training in new areas
- a whole new set of friends
- the satisfaction of making a difference in the community

You could get involved with your local community centre, help at the playgroup or drop-in centre. You may think you've got nothing to offer – but you'd be wrong. People are crying out for help – **from you!**

Many parents go along with their children to clubs and leisure activities and get involved themselves.

Swimming or football coaching is one example. Running the admin. side of a club is another.

Did you know that you can take courses in, for example, football coaching and business studies which will help you?

There's all kinds of voluntary work just waiting for someone to come along and help. **Someone needs you now!**

Plenty of voluntary organisations provide training for their volunteers, ranging from a short induction course through to workshops or weekend courses. Some will give you your travel expenses.

If you'd like some ideas, or have a particular interest, ask at your local volunteer bureau, community centre or Citizens Advice Bureau.

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CASE STUDY

Carole Britt

When Carole Britt started helping out with her daughter's Brownie pack, she little thought that it would open up new horizons:

"Alison was a Brownie and Jennifer a Rainbow, so since I was running them to and from anyway, it was natural for me to offer to help out occasionally. I really enjoyed it – but I was quite surprised when Brown Owl asked me if I'd ever considered going into uniform! My life revolved so much around what the children wanted to do that I'd never thought of doing anything for myself."

Brown Owl explained all the 'ins and outs' to Carol – she'd do around 15 hours' training, which could be spread over three years – after all, it's a position of responsibility. After a couple of training sessions and an interview with the Commissioner, Carol was awarded her Pre-Warrant – the preliminary stage undertaken while references are checked and training continues. Now, with all stages complete, Carol is eagerly awaiting her full Warrant:

"I'm in uniform now and enjoying every minute. It's good to know you're doing something worthwhile and contributing to the community. If people don't offer their help, these things will just peter out. We get quite involved with outside activities – the Carnival, Brownie Revels, a Crystal Maze [illegible] and the swimming gala. It's lovely to see the pleasure in the ch[illegible] and it's extra satisfying when we win!"

Further education and tertiary colleges

Further education and tertiary colleges have traditionally offered work-related ('vocational') courses along with academic courses, mostly for young people. But more and more adults are taking advantage of college courses.

Since colleges nowadays have to watch their student numbers more closely, they're having to think of new ways to bring in extra entrants – of all ages. They're also beginning to offer courses they've never offered before. For example, you may be surprised to hear that your local agricultural college may be offering a course in information technology – or upholstery!

Courses may be part-time or full-time, day-time or evening.

Some colleges run tasters which will give you a sample of what a course is like. Names vary around the country but they could be called something like Next Step, Return to Learn, Pathway, Wider Opportunities, New Directions or Gateway.

They're the ideal way of finding out what you want, combining:

- an introduction to what's on offer
- personal guidance
- confidence building
- communication skills
- information on further opportunities

For details, ask your local college – or at the local library.

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Higher education

Higher education takes place at universities, institutes of higher education and colleges including some further education colleges. They tend to offer advanced courses leading to degrees or Higher National Certificates or Diplomas (HNCs/HNDs).

Some universities run courses for adults through their Continuing Education or Extra Mural departments or Short Course Units. The name of the department may vary. Universities nowadays are keen to encourage mature students (that's anyone over 25!) In fact more than half of all undergraduates now are 'mature' students.

The structure of courses is changing too. More and more university degrees are divided into 'modules'. It means that you can do parts of a course and build up these modules or units into a degree over a period of time.

Why not give them a ring and find a course to suit you?

Read: University and College Entrance Guide (including a CD-Rom)
Available from: Sheed & Ward Ltd, 14 Coopers Row, London EC3N 2BH. Tel: 0171 702 9799

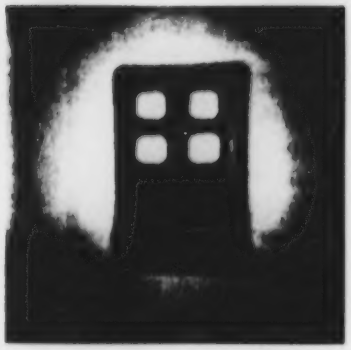
Stepping Up
Available from: University and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS), Fulton House, Jessop Avenue, Cheltenham, Gloucester GL50 3SH. Tel: 01242 222444

Access courses

Don't worry if you haven't got any GCSEs/SCEs, A levels or H grades and you'd like to try for a higher qualification. An Access course will help you get started.

Access courses give you the foundations to prepare you for higher education. They are usually run flexibly – such as short days – so that you can fit them in around your other commitments. There's also likely to be extra help available if you need it for aspects of the learning which you're not used to, such as study skills and essay writing.

It's a gentle way of easing you into the university environment. Find out what's on offer near you by contacting your local college.



MAKE YOUR EXPERIENCE COUNT

If you want to study or make a career move but you feel that you're being held back through lack of qualifications, Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) may be just what you need!

The knowledge, skills and understanding you have gained in your everyday life can now be valued and recognised – and used to help you gain a qualification.

A number of training providers have developed APL as part of their student services. Make sure you ask about it!

Read: Get Qualifications for what you can do – a personal guide to APL by Susan Simosko, published by Kogan Page
Ring 0171 278 0433 for details

SWAP in Scotland

Scottish Wider Access Programme organises courses for adults who don't have usual entry qualifications. Every student who successfully completes one of these courses is guaranteed a place in a university or higher education college.

Contact SWAP on:
0141 553 2471 (west of Scotland);
0131 650 6861 (east of Scotland); or
01771 622924.

CASE STUDY

Ann Firth

Ann Firth left school at 17 with O levels and worked for IBM, selling typewriters and running training courses for them. When she had children, she took various leisure courses – flower arranging, cookery and upholstery – but it was when she saw a leaflet about an Access course that her interest in higher education was sparked:

"It talked about opportunities for people who'd missed out the first time round, so I thought I'd go along. The course was split into two parts: Return to Study, covering studying skills; and an academic subject – I chose History and English. It was very informal and unpressurised, for two hours twice a week. Unlike school, everyone had opted to be there, so the atmosphere was more stimulating and relaxed, interesting and enjoyable."

Once she'd whetted her appetite for learning, Ann didn't stop:

"I went on to take a History degree for three years full-time at Sheffield University. When I was first offered the place I was both excited and frightened. I knew I'd have to work hard – you have to when you're older. But it was so rewarding. There was a fascinating cross section of people on the course, of all ages. It was exhilarating – and exhausting – but it's wonderful to have achieved my degree. I find now that I've got the learning bug. I know I'm capable of motivating myself to study at home and I just want to learn something new all the time! I've opened that door and I know I can go through it whenever I want to."

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Adult residential colleges

Listed below are just some of the colleges which offer long term residential courses to adults who may not have traditional educational qualifications. They may lead to the offer of a place on a higher education course. These colleges also offer a range of part-time, evening, Access, short courses and workshops.

Coleg Harlech, Harlech, Gwynedd LL46 2PU
Tel: 01766 780363

Co-operative College, Stanford Hall, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE12 5QR Tel: 01509 852333

Fircroft College, 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LH Tel: 0121 472 0116

Hillcroft College, South Bank, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6DF (women only) Tel: 0181 399 2688

Newbattle Abbey, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 3LL
Tel: 0131 663 1921

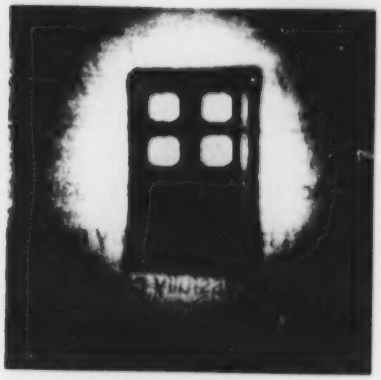
Northern College, Wentworth Castle, Stainborough, Barnsley S75 3ET Tel: 01226 285426

Plater College, Pullens Lane, Oxford OX3 0DT
Tel: 01865 740500

Ruskin College, Walton Street, Oxford OX1 2HE
Tel: 01865 554331

For full details of short-term adult residential colleges, contact the Adult Education Residential Colleges Association (ARCA), Alston Hall College, Preston, Lancashire Tel: 01772 784661

Time to Learn is a directory of residential weekend [illegible] Published twice yearly, costing [illegible] from bookshops [illegible] 11 Gilmorton Street Leicester LE1 7RJ



NATIONAL RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT (NRA)

A National Record of Achievement (NRA) can be used by people of all ages to review and record personal achievements, set targets and plan how to achieve them.

It is personal to you and you can use it when applying for a job, training, college or university place, as well as for career development interviews, appraisals and wider professional development.

The NRA has recently been the subject of a wide-ranging review. A new national record of achievement will be introduced progressively from September 1997, and relaunched nationally from September 1998. All existing NRAs remain valid and can continue to be used. Stationery will continue to be available until March 1998.

ASK YOUR LOCAL COLLEGE – OR YOUR EMPLOYER – FOR FURTHER DETAILS

Open and distance learning

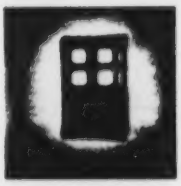
Do you find the idea of classes daunting? Or maybe you need to study at odd times – like when the children are in bed? Then open and distance learning may be for you. They offer a way of learning in your own time and at your own pace, to fit in with your commitments and lifestyle.

The study materials you are likely to use include workbooks, audio tapes and videos, computer disks and home experiment kits.

The great thing about open learning courses is their flexibility – you decide when, where and how fast you learn. And if you have a problem or query, there's often a tutor at the end of a phone to help you.

Some colleges have set up drop-in centres where people can plan their training programme with a college tutor and arrange to follow open learning courses using the college's facilities – such as computers or language labs.

But if you're going to follow an open learning course, you're going to need motivation and determination!



WHO'S MINDING THE CHILDREN

Some colleges and centres, especially those running courses for women returners, have creche facilities or nurseries so that small children can be cared for while parents study

If you're at work, you may find that there's a workplace nursery or creche

There are also private or Local Education Authority-run nurseries (run by councils or education departments in Scotland) – and out-of-school clubs for school age children, which are run in school buildings after school hours.

CASE STUDY

Yasmin Shaikh

Yasmin Shaikh was a bright school pupil who, as a teenage bride, had no opportunity to continue her education:

"I knew that by the time my youngest child was five and in full-time education I wouldn't be so dependent on other people and would at last be able to do something for myself, to improve my opportunities. But I was always told that I'd never do well at school so by the time I came to adult education I was completely lacking in confidence."

Yasmin speaks three Asian languages and, having spoken in Hindi all the time for several years, she'd completely got out of the habit of using English:

"I decided to do a GCSE English course to help my sentence structure. My tutor predicted me a grade D initially but I worked so hard that I ended up with a B! I didn't want to spend the rest of my life in the hosiery factory – it wasn't fulfilling enough for me, so I gave up my job to take a full-time Access to Higher Education course. I wanted to achieve something in my life that was recognised and that would give me status in society and the community.

"Now I'm studying for a university degree and really enjoying it. I've always been dedicated to education and, with the support of my partner, I'm making great progress. It's improved my self-confidence immeasurably. I used to be very shy and contribute nothing to the conversation – now I'm student rep, acting as a link between the students and the university and helping students with their problems. I'm also training to be a counsellor at the Rape Crisis centre. After another 18 months I'll have a degree – and I'm going to make sure I get a good one!"

CASE STUDY Emily M. Brown

Emily Brown

In 1996, Emily Brown was awarded an Adult Learners Award. Emily's a great ambassador for lifelong learning and regularly teaches handicrafts to partially sighted people. She's been disabled since she was a child, although when the war came she trained to be a nurse, a career she followed for 45 years.

Emily's always had a thirst for learning. For the past 13 years she's had no sight in one eye and only 1% in the other. That's restricted her methods of learning but not the scope. Emily enrolled for the Open University when she was 71, has passed both the Arts and Social Sciences Foundation courses and is now studying a music course:

"The Open University have been marvellous. When I first contacted them I said I thought I'd be no use at anything but they were very encouraging and said that there was nothing to stop me studying. When I pointed out that I'm a pensioner who's registered blind and on Income Support, they told me not to worry, they'd contribute to the fees and help with computer provision.

"I write all my essays on a computer which is on loan to me. A magnified screen lets me see only a few words at a time. I so enjoy it. It's allowed me into a world I wouldn't otherwise have been able to access."

Building up a qualification

Worried about not being able to complete your studies? Frustrated because you've already done part of a course?

CATS (Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme) allows you to gain credit for learning you've done in different places.

These credits eventually build up towards a qualification.

One benefit to you is that you can fit getting qualifications in with the rest of your lifestyle and commitments. For instance, if you start a course but stop half-way through, the credits you've gained can be used later if you decide to pick up your studies again.

You could end up with a qualification made up of courses you've taken at work, units from further education, open learning units and credits for APL.

For more information read:
The Students Guide to Credit Accumulation and Transfer

The Educational Credit Transfer Directory

They re available from
ECCTIS 2000 Oriel House, Oriel Road,
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 1XP
Tel: 01242 252627

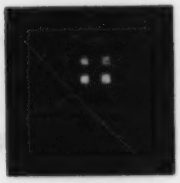
YOU'LL PROBABLY HAVE HEARD OF SOME OPEN LEARNING PROVIDERS, SUCH AS:

The Open University

The Open University (OU) offers degree, diploma and certificate courses which are open to all adults. You don't need qualifications to be accepted. And there's no age limit. Anyone can apply. It's first come, first served for places on most of their courses. Students learn from television and radio 'lectures' as well as textbooks and other materials.

Every OU student has a local tutor who runs seminars for students. They can be contacted by phone if necessary, as can many of the other students, so you've a chance to network with them too. Most students are also encouraged to take part in residential/summer schools.

Find out more from:
Open University Central Enquiries, PO Box 200
Milton Keynes MK7 6AA Tel: 01908 274066
In Scotland:
10 Drumsheugh Gardens EH3 7QJ Tel: 0131 226 3851



The Open College of the Arts

The Open College of the Arts (OCA) is affiliated to the Open University. It offers courses in creative arts, such as art and design, creative writing, drawing, garden design, history of art, music, painting, photography, sculpture and textiles.

As well as home study, students get tutorial back-up from tutors in various colleges of art, universities, schools, art centres, studios or, in some cases, by post.

Contact them at:
Open College of the Arts, Houndhill, Worsbrough
Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 6TU
Tel: 01226 730495

The Open College

The Open College specialises in work-related courses covering work skills, management and supervision, accountancy, health and care, technology and education and training.

Write to them for a prospectus, specifying which
courses you're interested in:
The Open College, St Paul's House, 781 Wilmslow Road,
Didsbury, Manchester M20 2RW
Tel: 0161 434 0007

The National Extension College

Thousands of students enrol with NEC each year on over 150 different home study courses. With more than 45 GCSE and A level subjects available, NEC offers the widest range of courses for these exams anywhere in the country. And the range of other recognised qualifications is equally impressive. NEC Student Advisers help over 50,000 students and potential students every year.

Find out more from:
National Extension College, 18 Brooklands Avenue,
Cambridge CB2 2HN Tel: 01223 316644

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TV learning

If you're not sure yet about signing up for a course, what about TV learning? After all, you don't have to make any great commitments to learn from TV programmes.

The BBC and Channel 4 transmit educational programmes for people who want to learn from home. Some programmes have their own books, audio and video cassettes which you can buy, as well as other material to help you make the most of them.

There are excellent courses to help you learn languages and develop skills and interests of all kinds, delivered direct to your home. You don't even need to leave your arm chair!

Look at a copy of the Radio Times for further information. Or contact the BBC Education Information Line on 0181 746 1111, Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5.30pm – and ask about the Learning Zone.

Or ring Channel 4 on 01926 433333.

[redacted]

Read 'How to Win as a part time student'
Available from
Kogan Page 120 Pentonville Road London N1 9JN
Tel 0171 278 0433

Mature Students' Guide
Available from
Trotman 12 Hill Rise Richmond Surrey TW10 6UA
Tel 0181 940 5668

[redacted]

Learning at work

More and more people choose to learn at work. And everyone benefits – individuals, employers .... and the country as a whole.

Getting qualifications which will help you at work

You could take a **day release** or **block release course**, combining work and college study so that you gain a qualification that's relevant to your job. Your employer may help you financially, from paying for courses to helping you with costs such as course books, and of course allowing you time off to pursue your studies.

Many companies provide '**in-house**' training to develop the skills of their staff, using structured training programmes. They can combine a variety of learning methods, from formal teaching to flexible open learning.

You can work your way towards a qualification such as an **NVQ (National Vocational Qualification)** or an **SVQ (Scottish Vocational Qualification)**, which will give you credit for the skills you use at work. These are flexible qualifications which do not necessarily require attendance on a formal course.

READ ABOUT THEM ON PAGE 44

CASE STUDY

A. M Royle

Andy Royle

Andy Royle is a fitter who has recently moved from an area where most of his skills were in machine and engine components:

"I know I'm not going to be doing that job in the future so I've learned new skills. I set out to find out more about the workshop I'm in and make myself more useful. Consequently, I'm taking a welding course on the company's Employee Development Scheme. I learn the whole range of welding on a college course, one evening a week for 18 weeks. It's a case of helping myself as well as the company. And since it's free I would have been mad not to have grasped the opportunity. There are things which you can do for yourself personally and this is one of them. The scheme has really helped people.

"In the past it was a case of leaving school, getting a job and not thinking much about training. You can't do that now. You just have to develop for the sake of your job. I've also done a Winter Skills course in Scotland on the Employee Development Scheme, which has helped me with the youth work I do. It's been a personal ambition of mine to get qualified in that area – and it's been good for team building too since it involved people who work in other areas here, including managers, so it really broke down barriers.

"I'm finding that I'm having a go at jobs at work that I probably wouldn't have had a go at before. And I know that if the worst came to the worst I could sell myself more easily on the job market than I could have done before because I've got several strings to my bow."

Employee Development Schemes

You may be able to take part in an Employee Development Scheme. They're thriving all over the country. In fact new ones are being set up as you read this!

Businesses and organisations of all shapes and sizes are finding that an Employee Development Scheme helps their people back into learning and everyone benefits. Many schemes provide a huge variety of opportunities. It doesn't usually matter what you choose to learn. The choice is yours. You simply select from courses on offer – or suggest a topic that appeals.

Often you can learn with friends and colleagues, sometimes at work – so you don't have to face walking into a strange classroom. But best of all – your employer pays at least part of the cost!

Employee Development Schemes have different names in different organisations but they have one thing in common – they all prove that learning's fun!

You could learn anything from power yoga to aerobics teaching, flower arranging to Spanish conversation, word processing to welding.

Find out whether your company has a scheme and, if so, what is on offer.

Check what's available – or maybe it's time you set one up where you work?!

Investing in people

Businesses nowadays are realising how important their employees are. More and more are working towards the Investors in People National Standard, which sets a level of good practice for improving an organisation's performance through its people.

The award shows that a company recognises that their people are their biggest asset – and are prepared to invest in them. All kinds of businesses are becoming Investors in People.

If you see this sign, it shows that the organisation has achieved Investor in People status.

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

However you choose to learn, make sure it's right for you and no matter how small the step towards learning – you never know where it will lead.

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Hayat Mostofa Ibrahim fled to England with her teenage daughter in 1994 when her husband was killed by Sudanese Government troops. She applied for political asylum and for a year they both lived in a hostel – a traumatic time.

'I had to do something to overcome my difficulties. I'd always been interested in learning how to use a computer, so when I saw the opportunity to enrol for a BTEC National Diploma in Computing Studies, I grasped it. I found it very hard, though, because the text books were in English and that wasn't my first language. So, in addition to the full-time BTEC course, I enrolled for a Cambridge Proficiency evening course to improve my English. It was quite a commitment but well worth it. In fact, it's the best thing to have happened in my life. I've always worked hard but this is the first time that my efforts have been recognised – so much so that I was awarded an Adult Learners award.

Hayat speaks four languages and is currently working part-time as an Outreach Worker for the Health Authority, giving training and information to community organisations and refugees. But she's looking for a job with computers.

'The course has given me a better future and improved my self confidence. I now feel sure I can do any job in that area very well. It's been a reward for all the other losses in my life and given me the will to carry on.'

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Out OF WORK?

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Out OF WORK?

Out of work?

A job for life is a thing of the past. That means that it's quite likely that all of us will experience a period of unemployment at least some time in our lives.

Many people are discovering that education and training can provide a route back into work – and there are specific education and training opportunities to help you if you're unemployed, as well as those already listed in this booklet.

How do you find out more?

Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in England and Wales and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland support various training schemes which may help you get a job, including Training for Work.

ASK YOUR LOCAL TEC/LEC, JOBCENTRE OR CAREERS SERVICE FOR DETAILS

More about Training for Work (TfW)

Training for Work is the Government's adult training programme. It's designed to help long-term unemployed people to get jobs, including self employment, through training and work experience.

TfW is generally available to people aged between 18 and 63 who have been unemployed for 26 weeks or more. Particular arrangements apply to lone parents, ex-regulars, former detainees and people who have been out of the labour market for over two years for domestic reasons.

There's immediate entry, though, for people:

- **with disabilities**
- **needing foundation/entry level literacy and/or numeracy training, including English or Welsh for Speakers of Other Languages**
- **made redundant in a large scale redundancy**

When demand for places exceeds supply, priority is given to people who have a combination of basic (word and number) skills, attitudinal and behavioural needs, together with people with disabilities.

A secondary priority is people who have been referred from the Employment Service's Jobplan Workshop, 1-2-1 Workwise, Jobfinder, Project Work and Restart courses.

Training for Work provides programmes of work experience and training which can last from a few weeks to a year or more. Time may be spent on a project, a placement with a local employer or on a training course. Trainees receive a training allowance – equivalent to their benefit plus a £10 premium. Other financial help may be available, including childcare expenses.

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EX-OFFENDERS

There are some useful organisations which offer help to ex-offenders and their families.

National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO),
169 Clapham Road,
London SW9 0PU
Tel: 0171 582 6500

Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (SACRO),
31 Palmerston Place,
Edinburgh EH12 5AP
Tel: 0131 226 4222

APEX Trust, St Alphage House (Wingate Annexe),
2 Fore Street,
London EC2Y 5DA
Tel: 0171 638 5931

APEX Scotland,
9 Great Stuart Street, Edinburgh EH3 7TP
Tel: 0131 220 0130

YOU MAY HAVE A GOOD IDEA WHICH COULD TURN INTO A BUSINESS

READ ABOUT SELF EMPLOYMENT ON PAGE 65

Claiming benefit while you're studying – the 21-hour rule

You may be able to take advantage of the rules which allow jobseekers to continue to receive Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) whilst undergoing part-time education or training.

Unemployed people who haven't been in full-time education for 3 months can continue to receive JSA if they become part-time students – provided they meet the usual entitlement conditions, including being available for and actively seeking employment, and are prepared to either rearrange or give up their course immediately if a job opportunity arises.

In England and Wales, a part-time student is defined as someone who is undertaking a course of 16 guided learning hours or less a week which is wholly or partly funded by the Further Education Council. In Scotland, the position is broadly the same except that the learning has to be under the direct guidance of teaching staff and an additional 5 hours of structured learning packages can be taken into account. In addition, the funding, is through the Scottish office.

If you wish to consider enrolling in a part-time course, you should always discuss the position with your local Jobcentre who will be able to give you advice.

Read: Jobseekers Allowance: Helping you back to work, and The rules on part-time study and training, both available from Jobcentres and Benefit Agency offices.

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Call in at the Jobcentre

People with disabilities looking for work can get a wide range of information, advice and practical help from their local Jobcentre. If your disability significantly affects the kind of work you can do, or your chances of getting and keeping work, you can ask to see a **Disability Employment Adviser** (DEA). DEAs are based in Jobcentres and are experienced in providing specialist advice and practical help to people with a wide range of disabilities, to find the right job.

Your DEA will help you to identify what type of work to look for. If you are worried about how your disability will be affected by your work environment, they can advise you on the practical help available through **Access to Work** – from adapting work premises to having a support worker. Your DEA can also arrange for you to try a job on a trial basis, through the **Job Introduction Scheme**.

Your DEA is part of the Employment Service's **Placement, Assessment and Counselling Team** (PACT). PACTs provide specialist employment advice to disabled people and their employers.

Together, Jobcentres, DEAs and PACTs can help you and your employer to make the most of your abilities. For further information about how they can help, ask for a copy of our 'Make it Work' leaflet at your local Jobcentre.

Disabled people can also enter many of the programmes available without having to satisfy the qualifying periods of unemployment.

SKILL: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

SKILL aims to develop opportunities in further, higher and adult education, training and employment for people in the UK who are over 16 and who have disabilities or learning difficulties.

SKILL's information service can deal with enquiries by phone or by letter from people with disabilities, their families, friends or work colleagues. SKILL also produce a range of free publications and information sheets.

For details contact SKILL: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities, 336 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AA Telephone information service Tel: 0171 978 9890, between 1.30-4.30 Minicom Line 0171 7387722.

LEAD (Linking Education and Disability)

LEAD (Linking Education and Disability) is a Scottish-based service which helps disabled people access learning opportunities.

For details contact LEAD, Queen Margaret College, Clerwood Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 8TS Tel: 0131 317 3439

MENCAP Pathway Employment Service

MENCAP's Pathway Employment Service has been set up to help people with learning difficulties and their employers.

If you have a learning difficulty and you join an employer for a trial period or training, the employer may be able to get a grant towards the employment costs. If another employee helps a colleague with a learning difficulty, they may also qualify for a grant.

Contact MENCAP Employment Service at National Centre, 123 Golden Lane, London EC1Y 0RT Tel: 0171 454 0454

Residential courses

Several voluntary organisations, such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind, run residential courses and training designed for people with specific disabilities.

Find out more from the Disability Employment Adviser at the Jobcentre

THERE'S MORE HELP AROUND THAN YOU MAY THINK!

Many colleges and universities have advisers for students with disabilities

Are you a lone parent?

Around a million one-parent families live on Income Support. To improve their financial situation they need to find full-time or well-paid work – as well as good childcare arrangements.

There's particular help available for lone parents who are training or studying.

Studying or training without it affecting your benefit

If you're a lone parent with one or more children under 16, and you've been receiving Income Support for at least three of the six months before your course starts, then you can study full or part-time without it affecting your benefit.

Courses available include GCSEs, further education courses, Access courses, and higher education certificates, diplomas or degrees. Remember, though, that grants or bursaries you receive will be taken into account as income.

Help with fees

In many cases you'll just be charged a lower rate. Or the course may be completely free!

Childcare

Many courses aimed at women going back to work are timetabled so that they fit in with school hours. But childcare may still be a problem for you.

Ask whether there are free or subsidised creche facilities where you are.

Training for Work

Lone parents on Training for Work schemes may qualify for childcare allowances.

The National Council for One Parent Families (NCOPF)

The National Council for One Parent Families helps lone parents in a variety of ways, including getting back to work. NCOPF run Return to Work courses and Threshold, a project to help create new opportunities for lone parents who want to return to work.

Returning to Work – a guide for one parent families is available from National Council for One Parent Families, 255 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2LX Tel: 0171 267 1361

In Scotland, contact the Scottish Council for One Parent Families, 101 Whitfield Drive, Dundee DD4 0AG Tel: 01382 501972 or One Parent Families Scotland, 13 Gayfield Square, Edinburgh EH1 3NX Tel: 0131 556 3899

CHILDCARE

Contact the Pre-School Learning Alliance, 69 Kings Cross Road, London WC1X 9LL Tel: 0171 833 0991 for details of learning opportunities for parents with young children.

Working for Childcare, 77 Holloway Road, London N7 8JZ Tel: 0171 700 0281 promotes the development of quality childcare to meet the needs of working parents and their children. They can also give advice on setting up a nursery.

Tips on job hunting

Moving on into new areas and taking on fresh challenges will mean facing different – and sometimes daunting – situations.

If you want to feel confident about dealing with change, it helps to make a plan of action. Write down your strengths, skills and qualities. And read through the following tips.

Remember – think positive and you'll present yourself in a better light!

Applying for jobs –

- **Whether you're replying to a job ad or writing a letter 'on spec', aim to write in a straightforward, direct way. Very formal business language is awkward and out-of-date.**
- **Work out what you're going to say first and express it clearly and in a logical order.**
- **If you're not sure about spelling and punctuation, ask someone to check it for you.**
- **Keep a copy of what you've written and look at it before an interview.**

Ask for help at the Jobcentre or Citizens Advice Bureau.

Filling in forms –

- **Once you've got an application form, read it through carefully before you do anything.**
- **It's a good idea to make a couple of photocopies of the form so that you can prepare a draft first.**
- **Check any instructions on the form – like using block capitals or black ink.**
- **You could always add a short covering letter or CV if you feel the form hasn't done you justice.**

Personal Information Charts (PICs) and Curriculum Vitae (CVs) –

A summary of your personal details, education, experience and skills. It's an advertisement for you! They can be difficult to write but it's worth spending time to get them right.

- **Plan what you're going to say about yourself and make a few drafts before you settle on the final wording.**
- **Don't be too modest!**
- **Be sure to include details of what you can do – your work tasks, skills you've developed and achievements at home and in the community as well as at work.**
- **Get the CV typed and make clear photocopies.**

Winning at interview

A good interviewer will make you feel at ease. But to make sure your interview goes smoothly, it's a good idea to take steps to help you through.

Tick the boxes below as you work through them:
Before the interview:

Find out about the company and the job on offer

Work out some answers to possible questions – such as the relevant skills you have to offer and why you want the job

Think of some examples to show that you're a motivated, reliable person

Plan in advance what you're going to wear – and make sure you're clean and tidy!

Arrive a little early.

Don't smoke unless you're invited to.

If you don't get the job, it's OK to contact the employer to say that you'd still be interested if another vacancy arose.

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Peter Doyle is a much respected Regional Officer for the trade union, UNISON, the largest public sector union in Europe. But he wasn't always so successful.

'I left school at 15 and hardly even knew the alphabet. I went to night school to get help with my reading and writing and that really revealed the wonders of literature to me. Reading is a real pleasure in my life now.

'Over many years I had all kinds of jobs. I've always been active in the Labour and Trade Union movement. I was a Shop Steward at the age of 17, growing a beard to gain gravitas! – and over the years I've developed useful skills. As a member of NUPE, I decided to apply for a job working full-time for them. I got it based solely on my record and experience. I haven't an educational qualification to my name but my capability was valued within the union.'

When NUPE amalgamated with COHSE and NALGO to become UNISON, Peter remained a Regional Officer. As NVQs came on stream, he recognised their importance.

'Many of our members have no academic qualifications. NVQs give them the chance to have recognised the skills and knowledge they've built up over years. What a wonderful opportunity to get an NVQ Level 3 (equivalent to an A Level) and Level 4 (even higher). In terms of confidence, NVQs have transformed some of our members, particularly those aged between 40 and 60 – at last they have a piece of paper that shows their worth.'

Peter has negotiated NVQ training schemes for hundreds of his members in Cumbria. But when NVQs appeared for Professional Trade Union Officers, he knew it was time to have a go himself.

'I want that bit of paper now. I too want that recognition and a qualification which could even open doors for me to university. NVQs are a valuable qualification and a stepping stone for me just as much as for my members.'

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OPM GUIDE TO QUALIFICATIONS

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Your GUIDE TO QUALIFICATIONS

The qualification system has changed so much over the last few years. There are now new ways of getting recognition for your learning.

It's not just a question of O and A levels (O levels don't even exist any more!) There are plenty of other qualifications to choose.

And there's bound to be something to suit you!

NVQs and SVQs

Qualifications are more important than ever before. But you may have been doing a job for years and still not have any recognition for your skills and experience.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) have been developed to give people the opportunity to gain credit for the work they do.

NVQs and SVQs are qualifications based on nationally recognised standards which people need to reach in their ways of working. The standards have been approved by industry and commerce and are used to measure your ability to do the job.

- **They cover all types of work at all levels.**
- **You can take them whether you're in or out of work.**
- **Your previous experience counts.**
- **You don't need any qualifications already.**
- **There are no age limits.**

They are grouped into five levels, depending on how complicated the work is and the amount of responsibility involved. As you gain more skills, you can progress up the NVQ/SVQ framework.

THERE ARE NOW WELL OVER 800 DIFFERENT NVQS TO CHOOSE FROM!

Contact:
National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) 222 Euston Road, London NW1 2BZ

for advice on NVQs and GNVQs and free publications

Telephone:

North West	**01925 830840**
Northern	**0113 230 6330**
N. Ireland	**01232 330706**
Midlands	**01203 692749**
South & East	**01727 835252**
South West	**0117 934 9696**
Wales	**01222 369393**

Scottish Qualifications Authority, Hanover House, 24 Douglas Street, Glasgow G2 7NQ

for advice on SVQs and GSVQs.
Telephone 0141 242 2214

For publications
Telephone 0141 242 2168

Ray Carter's learning as a mature student has 'spurred him on to further goals' – and to spreading the word to other people that learning is good for you!

I spent 23 years at work rising through the ranks to become a senior manager within a Technical Engineering environment. In 1995, as part of my own personal development, I enrolled as a mature student undertaking an MA in Personal and Organisational Development at Middlesex University. I'd already completed a Diploma in Employment Law and Personnel Practice in 1994 but I found the Masters a somewhat daunting task because I'd never taken a first degree. The MA is a part-time course which combines residential modules with 'action learning' (working through projects and papers in groups, with the support of a tutor).

On top of this, I decided that I wanted to gain a professional Personnel qualification and Membership of the Institute of Personnel and Development. Because of the commitments involved in my MA I didn't feel that I could embark upon a college course so an NVQ in Personnel at Level 5 was the obvious solution, enabling me to reach my goals without taking significant time away from work.

Ray has found that the different elements of his learning portfolio have added interest and variety.

'It's only natural for people to be apprehensive at first – I know I was. Being assessed at work, for example, felt a bit like having to retake my driving test. It's daunting. But as the book says, "Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway". It's something that has changed my life for the better. And it's satisfying now to be able to engage others in learning – and watch them grow as a result.'

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GNVQs

General National Vocational Qualifications (GSVQs in Scotland) give you a broad preparation for employment, training and further and higher education.

GNVQs/GSVQs aren't just about remembering facts or developing one or two skills. They aim to develop the knowledge and skills relevant to broad areas of work such as business, health and social care, engineering and art and design. They also develop key skills in communication, numeracy and information technology.

GNVQs are available at three levels:

- Foundation
- Intermediate
- Advanced

To find out more, ask at your local school or college for details – or contact NCVQ or the Scottish Qualifications Authority on the numbers mentioned under NVQs and SVQs. Or you could read British Vocational Qualifications or NVQs and how to get them.

It's available from Kogan Page, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN Tel: 0171 278 0433

Remember ..... don't be put off by the word 'qualification'. You probably already know more than you think.

Other qualifications

As well as their work-related courses, local further education colleges offer courses leading to academic qualifications which you may have heard of already – and which might suit you now.

GCSEs

The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) replaced the old GCE O level and CSE exams. GCSEs are the major qualification taken by 16-year-olds, but they may also be taken by older students. GCSEs are generally assessed by a mixture of end of course exams and coursework, the latter being set and marked during the course.

GCE A levels

The Advanced level General Certificate of Education (GCE A level) is the main qualification into higher education and is a recognised way into many jobs.

AS qualifications

The aim of AS qualifications is to give students taking GCE A levels greater choice. They're designed to take half as much study time as a full GCE A level. For a higher education course, one AS qualification is thought of as equal to half a GCE A level.

Read 'How to pass A levels and GNVQ'.
It's available from Kogan Page, 120 Pentonville Rd, London N1 9BR Tel: 0171 278 0433.

Scottish Standard grades and Highers

In Scotland the equivalent to the GCSE is the Standard (S) grade. (It used to be known as O level.) Highers are the shorter, less specialised courses of study that Scottish students take instead of A levels. They are the main route to Scottish universities.

Contact
SVQs and GSVQs
For publication

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Kathryn Peck left home at 17 with two O levels, trained as a fashion buyer with Dickins & Jones in London – and gave it up to bring up her three sons. As the boys grew up Kathryn wanted to train for a job which would combine her creative abilities with a natural desire to work with children, and yet fit in with family responsibilities.

The NNEB Diploma in Nursery Nursing offered me the scope I wanted, covering a wide range of areas, from children with special needs to hospital or care, to our work, without having to specialise early on.

It also gave her an opportunity, she discovered, to use

I was full of those typical mid life insecurities – this course enabled me to dip my toe into learning to see whether I could do it. Much to my amazement, not only did I enjoy it – I was good at it!

Kathryn's confidence grew over the two years. When she finished the course, she did supply work at her placement schools before taking a full time job as a Nursery Nurse at a private school. Last year the school merged with another locally, and a new set of jobs were available. Kathryn now has a class of 16 2 – 4 year olds, and her own classroom assistant.

It's all consuming – to see the raw potential of the children when they come in, and watch them develop, setting them on the road of their future education is an extremely satisfying experience. I could never have got this job without my qualification.

Kathryn is now in her second year of an Open University degree, following an Arts course – music, literature, art history and philosophy.

I'd been so anti education as a teenager – it's a wonderful experience now, meeting people from so many different backgrounds. You get to a stage in life where you could continue what you're doing – or you could snatch a chance at something else. Having taken that first step, I'm now finding new paths open to me. It's worth it.

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Comparing qualifications

GNVQ level	GCSE/A level Equivalent	NVQ/SVQ Equivalent	Next Step ...
Foundation	4 GCSE grades D-G	1 NVQ level 1	Study for Intermediate level GNVQ
Intermediate	4 GCSE grades A*-C	1 NVQ level 2	Study for Advanced level GNVQ
Advanced	2 GCE A levels and AS courses	1 NVQ level 3	Apply for Higher Education or advance craft, technical or administrative jobs

Awarding bodies

Edexcel – formerly BTEC and London Examinations

The Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) and the University of London Examinations and Assessment Council (ULEAC) merged on the 1January 1996 to form the Edexcel Foundation.

Edexcel is unique in that it is the only Examining or Awarding Body capable of offering academic, occupational and vocational qualifications. Its courses are available through schools, colleges, universities and as distance learning packages.

You can study:

- **full-time**
- **day-release**
- **evening classes**
- **block-release**
- **sandwich courses**
- **open learning**

Through London Examinations you can study GCSEs, AS and A levels. Through BTEC you can study GNVQs, NVQs or any of BTECs own qualifications such as their Nationals and Higher Nationals.

Edexcel offers a coherent frame-work of qualifications across all of the pathways and the only Board where under one roof you are able to pick a mix 'n match, for example A levels with a GNVQ and some NVQ units.

For further information contact Edexcel's Customer Enquiry Unit on 0171 393 4444

Awarding bodies

RSA Examinations Board

The RSA Examinations Board sets exams particularly in business related areas. You don't need qualifications to get into the courses, but for the more advanced courses you'll need relevant experience.

If you want to know more contact the
RSA Examinations Board, Progress House
Westwood Way, Coventry CV4 8HS Tel: 01203 470033

City & Guilds

The City and Guilds offers a wide range of qualifications relating to almost every area of working life. They may be done in colleges, workplaces, training centres and schools on a part or full-time basis. Basic skills qualifications include literacy, numeracy and information technology. Popular qualifications such as Wordpower and Numberpower are based on standards set by the Basic Skills Agency. Other qualifications include NVQs and GNVQs from basic level upwards.

Contact the City & Guilds Customer Services Enquiries Unit
at 1 Giltspur Street, London EC1A 9DD
Tel: 0171 294 2800 1 2 4 5

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examinations Board

LCCI Examinations Board have been offering vocational qualifications for over 100 years and operate internationally. They offer business-related awards in over 80 countries around the world, as well as basic skills awards: Wordpower, Number power and the Vocational Access Certificate. NVQs offered by LCCIEB include all the key business functions of Accounting, Administration, Customer Service, Sales, Management and many more.

For more information contact
LCCI Examinations Board, [illegible]
Kent DA15 7EU
Tel: 0181 302 0261

Scottish Qualifications Authority

In April 1997, the Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC) merged with the Scottish Examinations Board to form the Scottish Qualifications Authority. They are responsible for developing, awarding and accrediting vocational and academic qualifications.

For more details contact them at:
Hanover House, 24 Douglas Street, [illegible]
Tel: 0141 242 2168

Open College Networks (OCNs)

Open College Networks are local and regional organisations which aim to provide adult learners with an opportunity to gain qualifications.

OCNs don't provide courses themselves – they work through colleges, universities, community schools and other adult education providers to ensure that the new qualifications on offer to adult learners in their region are "adult friendly" and meet the necessary standards.

The OCN awards certificates and credits at four levels for work successfully completed. You can keep them in a folder – they can be useful for job applications and interviews. Subjects could be short academic courses in, say, history, music appreciation or literature – or practical skills like art, badminton or car maintenance.

WHICHEVER ROUTE INTO LEARNING YOU CHOOSE
MAKE SURE IT SUITS YOU

Learning IN EUROPE

You may never have thought of it before ..... but choosing education or training in Europe gives you the best of both worlds. Not only do you broaden your knowledge, your horizons and your qualifications – you get the chance to enjoy a trip abroad at the same time!

You'll need to check out tuition costs, residency laws and how their higher education system works so that you can choose the best course for you.

It might help to read Higher Education in the European Community, published free by the European Commission.

There are various ways of doing it. You could:

- **incorporate a course as part of a holiday**
- **take time abroad as part of a college course over here**
- **enrol on a course in the country of your choice**

Experience abroad gives you a valuable addition to your CV – especially now that businesses are competing in Europe and the world market and looking for employees who can communicate with clients.

Pick up a copy of the M:Ploy Europe booklet. It's produced by the Department for Education and Employment and available at your local Jobcentre or Careers Service.

LEARNING IN EUROPE

OPTING FOR EDUCATION OR TRAINING IN EUROPE GIVES YOU THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

YOU EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND ADD TO YOUR QUALIFICATIONS – AND YOU GET THE CHANCE TO ENJOY FOREIGN TRAVEL AT THE SAME TIME

YOU COULD INCORPORATE A COURSE AS PART OF A BREAK AWAY

EXPERIENCE ABROAD GIVES YOU A VALUABLE ADDITION TO YOUR CV – ESPECIALLY NOW THAT BUSINESSES ARE COMPETING IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD MARKET

Learning IN EUROPE

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Study Holidays

Study holidays allow you to learn without the pressure of a college course. They're usually related to languages or arts subjects, combining language tuition with experience in a foreign country.

Courses based at UK universities

Plenty of UK-based courses have a spell of education or training abroad. Traditional language degree courses, for example, combine the study of a language with the study of a country's literature and culture. You'll usually spend six months or a year in the country you're studying.

Some UK universities have links with similar institutions in Europe to produce courses which are based in two or more countries. For these courses students spend up to half of their four-year course abroad, ending up with both a British and a foreign degree or diploma.

If you've chosen another subject, you can combine it with a language course as well. With a qualification like that, you should be able to move on and train or work in another country – and get a foot in the door before the competition when it comes to finding a job.

Courses at European universities

The most popular courses for students to take at a European university are those that last between one and six months. They're just the right length to give you a taster of another system, another culture – and another language.

As a UK citizen you can apply for any higher education course in the EU – as long as you meet the entry requirements. Since most courses are taught in the country's native language, you'll need to be fluent in that language first. Having said that, there are 'crash' courses available to prepare you.

The European University Institute in Florence and the College of Europe in Bruges are two of the best known post-graduate institutions. They offer one-year MA courses and three-year doctoral degrees which specifically relate to European studies.

You can find out more from the Student Support Division, Department for Education and Employment, Room 333, Mowden Hall, Staindrop Road, Darlington DL3 9BG Tel: 01325 392804

Read: Studying in Europe
It's available from BIBLIOS, Star Road, Partridge Green, West Sussex RH13 8LD
Tel: 01403 710851

LEARNING IN EUROPE

AS A UK CITIZEN YOU CAN APPLY FOR ANY HIGHER EDUCATION COURSE IN THE EU – AS LONG AS YOU MEET THE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE IN FLORENCE AND THE COLLEGE OF EUROPE IN BRUGES ARE TWO OF THE BEST KNOWN POST-GRADUATE INSTITUTIONS.

Funding

YOUR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Funding

YOUR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Sorting out finance for education and training can be complicated at the best of times. When you're that bit older, it can seem a nightmare!

If you want to go on a course or gain a qualification, remember that it may cost you money. The sort of costs you need to think about include:

- **the course fees**
- **extra costs such as transport, books, equipment and living expenses if you're away from home**

But you may be eligible for some financial help. Whether you are or not depends on the course, your individual circumstances and the policy of your local education authority.

Remember too that many courses or training are part of a job, so it's worth speaking to your employer to see if they can help.

IF YOU'RE UNEMPLOYED, THERE MAY BE EXTRA HELP WITH FUNDING

READ PAGE 35 FOR MORE DETAILS

You need to

- **Contact your local education authority (LEA) if you're in England or Wales, your Further Education college if you live in Scotland, or the Department of Education for Northern Ireland. Find them in the phone book.**

  They'll be able to give you the latest information about grants, fees and other information relating to education and training costs.

- **Contact your local TEC or LEC if you're thinking of taking a training course. They may be able to help. If you've been unemployed or receiving benefit, then you may be entitled to an allowance equal to benefit plus £10 per week. Fees for course tuition and books will be met and there may also be help with transport and childcare costs.**

Ask for details at your local TEC/LEC or the Jobcentre.

If you're thinking about a course at a local adult education centre, community centre or sixth form college, you'll usually find there's a charge. But if you're unemployed or on a low income, you can often get special rates.

Ask about it when you find out about the course.

At an adult residential college, all students on full-time courses receive a bursary which covers fees, residence and dependants' allowances.

The colleges listed on page 26 will give you further details.

Open Learning courses – the Open University, Open College, Open College of the Arts and National Extension College for example, all require a fee for their open learning courses. Sometimes they let you pay in instalments. For some courses you may get help with fees from your LEA or employer. And if you're claiming benefit you could be eligible for reduced rates.

Awards

If you go an a higher education course at undergraduate level, you'll usually qualify for a mandatory award and a student loan. Local education authorities (LEAs) in England and Wales (Student Awards Agency in Scotland) make two sorts of awards:

- mandatory – that's an award which must be paid to students who are eligible and enrolled on a designated course
- discretionary – awards the LEA chooses to make to students who are not eligible for a mandatory award.

Grants for further education courses, including Access courses, are discretionary. The council decide which they fund.

LEA policy varies. It's always best to contact yours for details.

WHAT DOES A MANDATORY AWARD COVER?

Rules about mandatory awards are complicated but they're the same throughout the UK. An award consists of two elements:

- **Tuition fees – usually paid in full for UK students, irrespective of their means**
- **A maintenance grant – this is payable towards your living expenses and is based on income. For younger students the level of grant usually depends on their parents income. Older students do not have their parents income taken into account, but all students who have been married for at least two years have their spouse's income included in their assessment.**

Contact your LEA in England or Wales,the Student Awards Agency in Scotland or the Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

LEAs are listed in the phone book under the name of your local Borough or County Council.

Student loans

Full-time students who are under 50 when their course starts and who are studying on approved courses can take out loans from the Students Loans Company.

The maximum in 1997/8 is £1685 for each full year of the course (£2085 in London). But the maximum loan is lower in the final year of a course because the loan doesn't cover the summer holiday of that year. Repayments don't start until the April after you finish or leave the course. The amount borrowed will be adjusted in line with inflation so that the value of the amount you pay back will be broadly the same as the value of the amount you borrowed.

Repayments may be deferred if your income is low.

If you're uncertain, ask your college or university for details.

Or read Student Loans – a guide to students – free from: Student Loans Company Ltd, 100 Bothwell Street, Glasgow G2 7JD
Telephone Link enquiry service: 0800 405010

There are free booklets about student grants and loans: Student Grants and Loans – a brief guide for higher education students – **available free from the DfEE's Publications Centre: Tel: 0171 510 0150**

Awards and Loans to Students – a brief guide (Northern Ireland) – available free from local Education and Library Boards or: The Department of Education Student Support Branch, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, County Down BT19 7PR Tel: 01247 279279

Guide to Undergraduate Allowances (For Scottish students) available free from Student Awards Agency, 3 Redheughs Rigg, Edinburgh EH12 9HH Tel: 0131 556 8400

Career Development Loans

If you're planning to do a course that's job related and you can't afford to pay for it, a Career Development Loan might help.

The loans are available through a partnership between the Department for Education and Employment and four major high street banks – Barclays, The Co-operative, Clydesdale and The Royal Bank of Scotland. You can apply to borrow between £300 and £8000 to cover 80% of your course fees (100% in some cases) as well as the full costs of books, materials and other expenses such as childcare. Repayments are deferred for the length of the course and up to a further month – or up to six months if you're unemployed when your repayments should start.

Contact your local TEC or LEC for further information, or phone free on 0800 585505 between 9am and 9pm, Monday to Friday, for an information pack.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT LOANS ARE NOT AVAILABLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Tax relief

If you're 16 or over and not in full-time education at a school you may be able to get tax relief on the fees you pay for vocational training. The training must be capable of leading to an NVQ, SVQ, GNVQ or GSVQ. You can't get this tax relief if you're receiving help under various Government programmes or initiatives – although from 1 January 1997 you may get it even if you're receiving a Career Development Loan (CDL) or college access funds.

Basic rate relief is given at source when you pay for your training. Your training provider will help you. This means that even if you don't usually pay income tax, you'll get help.

If you're 30 or over you may be able to get tax relief when you pay for a vocational course that isn't linked to an NVQ or SVQ. The course must be full-time and last longer than four weeks but less than a year.

If your training provider can't help or you'd like further details, read the Inland Revenue leaflet Tax Relief for Vocational Training, Leaflet IR 119, available free from Tax Enquiry Centres and Tax Offices.

SOCRATES

SOCRATES is the European Community action programme for co-operation in the field of education. The programme aims to develop a European dimension in education by promoting improvements in language competence (covered by LINGUA) and by encouraging the mobility of teachers and students (covered by ERASMUS), and in other ways.

Funding a course in Europe

If you're thinking about a course in Europe, your local authority may provide a grant.

You need to apply through your college.

And ask embassies about scholarships for long term study abroad.

Another country isn't likely to pay all your tuition fees and your maintenance costs. But tuition costs aren't particularly high in the EU, so you may be able to afford it. You'll have to prove, though, that you have sufficient means to support yourself over there and pay the fees.

Read: The European Choice. Published free by the Department for Education and Employment, it gives advice on financial support and the various EU programmes designed to encourage and assist student mobility.

Socrates

SOCRATES is the European Community action programme for co-operation in the field of education. The programme aims to develop a European dimension in education by promoting improvements in language competence (covered by LINGUA) and by encouraging the mobility of teachers and students (covered by ERASMUS), and in other ways.

Contact: SOCRATES Programme, DfEE, Caxton House, Tothill Street, London SW1N 9NF Tel: 0171 925 5555

If you get a place at the European University Institute in Florence, the College of Europe in Bruges or the Bologna Centre in Bologna, the DfEE may give you a grant and pay some expenses.

Contact: Student Support Division, Department for Education and Employment, Room 333, Mowden Hall, Staindrop Road, Darlington DL3 9BG Tel: 01325 392804

In the autumn of 1995 38 people with severe disabilities in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire embarked upon Landmarks in Learning. By Christmas all 38 of them had achieved credits in training modules accredited by South Yorkshire College.

The activities are all based on a working farm looking after the animals and maintaining the land and machinery. Linked to that is the pottery studio and craft activities such as dried flower gardening, where an extraordinarily high standard of work is attained.

Damian Prior explains:

"We're providing an environment for people to learn at their own pace in a stimulating, non-threatening setting. Everyone has their own individual programme which sets goals that they can reach. We're focusing on skills and abilities, encouraging feelings of confidence and self esteem to equip people for a positive role and greater fulfilment in the community."

The project is funded by a variety of sources, including the local Training and Enterprise Council and the European Social Fund. All courses are accredited by the Open College Network but the centre is hoping to register as an approved centre for offering Vocational Access Certificates, allowing people to move on to NVQs.

As the group says:

"We all have some disability but this doesn't stop us from being excellent at what we do. Not everybody is good at everything, but everybody is good at something."

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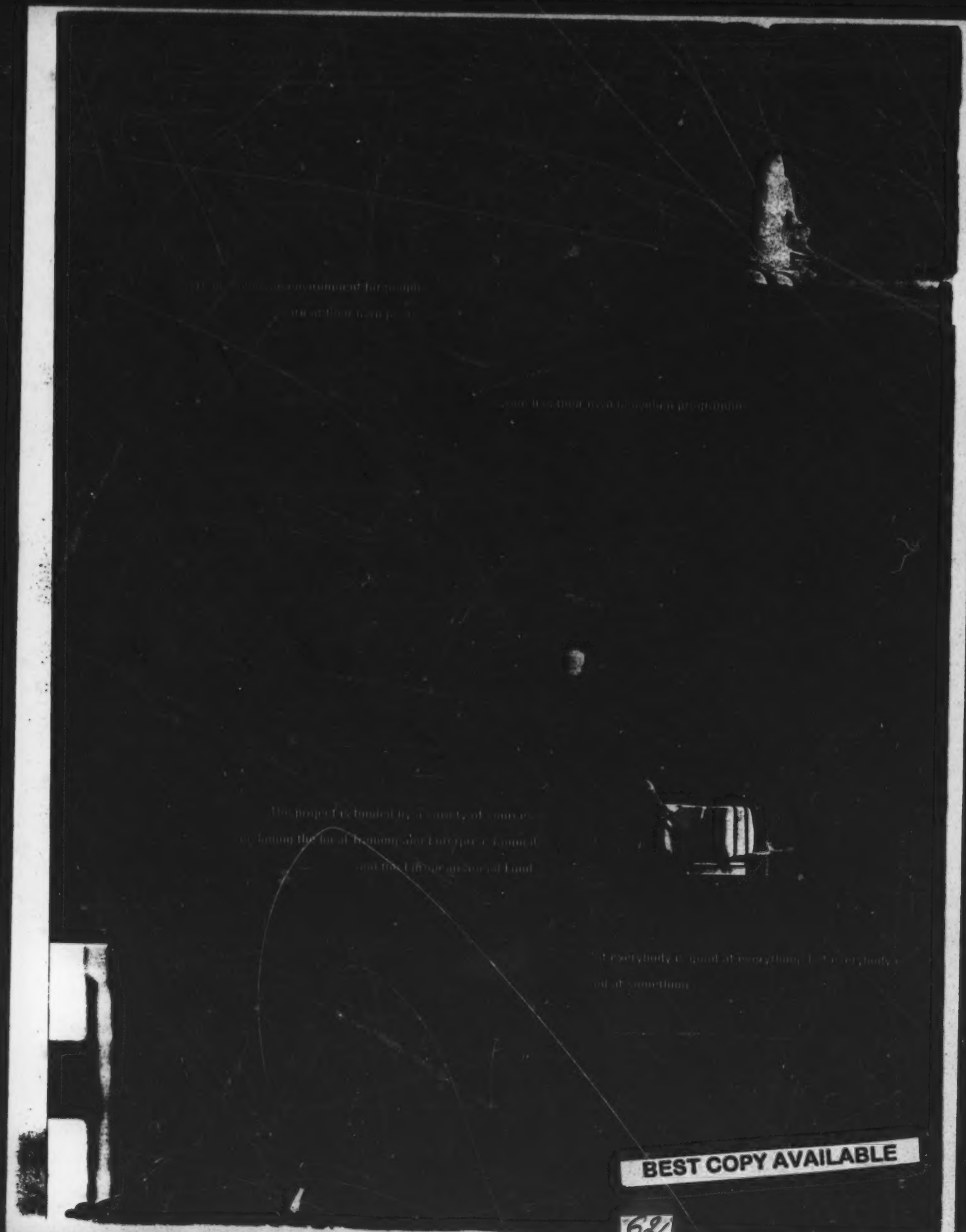

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As you read this, Isi Summers may well be heavering away at her computer literacy course, tackling a spreadsheet or database or tapping away at word processing.

'I work part-time from home, using a computer for admin work, so I wanted to brush up those skills and catch up with the children, who are already adept with computers from their experience at school.

Isi saw a course advertised in her local paper, which fits in with her lifestyle ideally.

'It's run very flexibly. You only have to undertake to do six hours a week, but that can be at any time on any weekday between 9am and 9pm. You work at your own pace, with your own computer and there's always someone there to help you when you get stuck.

'There are up to a couple of dozen people at the centre at any one time, aged from 16 to 60 (plus an 83 year old!). The necessities of a kettle and microwave are on hand! And it's never daunting.

'You're shown the ropes initially with a couple of other newcomers, which is reassuring. You work towards National Vocational Qualifications, which you can have certificated if you want to. The whole course costs £3, which covers your enrolment as a student (and the discounts that go with that!). It's brilliant, very friendly and light-hearted and a good way to meet people. I'm looking forward to being able to sit down at any computer and understand my way around.'

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Ways OF WORKING

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Ways OF WORKING

More and more of us want – or need – to work flexibly, rather than in the traditional ways. Employers too are often keen to accommodate different ways of working.

If you want to combine studying and working, then flexible working could be just what you're looking for.

Or you may be ...

- **bringing up children**
- **caring for a dependent relative**
- **wanting to decrease your working hours as you approach retirement**
- **wanting to study and work**
- **wanting more leisure time**
- **needing to fit in with physical restrictions – such as a disability**

You could consider ...

Part-time working

Part-time working – it's very popular. Part-time work lets you balance family and domestic responsibilities with the need to earn a living. You get paid just for the number of hours you work – but you have the same rights as your full-time colleagues.

Flexible working

Flexible working (also known as 'flexi-time') – gives you some choice about the hours you work. The total number of hours you work in a week or month are fixed, but you can spread them over that time as suits you. (Often you have to be at work during certain 'core' hours such as 10am-2pm.) You can usually choose your starting and finishing times, leaving you free to beat the rush hour, pick up the children or go off and study.

USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

It's known as teleworking and it's a fast-growing way of working flexibly.

Instead of going into an office every day, you can work from home using information technology (such as computer, fax and modem) or you can divide your time between home, work and other locations.

It's as flexible as you want to make it and can also form the basis of self employment.

See page 16 for help with information technology. And look at page 65 for information about self employment.

WAYS OF WORKING

PART-TIME WORKING

FLEXIBLE WORKING

TERM-TIME WORKING

JOB SHARING

CAREER BREAKS

CHECK WITH YOUR EMPLOYER WHAT'S AVAILABLE

Term-time working

Term-time working is an arrangement where you can take unpaid time off during school holidays. Again, you have the same conditions of service as permanent staff.

Job sharing

Job sharing is more and more accepted now. It's a way of working where two or more people share one full-time job between them. Each sharer may, in theory, do half the work – but in practice they often do just that little bit more each! It can be a very flexible way to work, though, with the division of labour varying to suit the people taking part.

Career breaks

Career breaks are allowed by some companies if you need some time away from work – to bring up children, for example. You can keep in touch with your work through training courses or going into work occasionally. Career breaks of several months or more are sometimes referred to as sabbaticals.

CHECK WITH YOUR EMPLOYER WHAT'S AVAILABLE.

You could contact

The Women Returners Network, 100 Park Village East, London NW1 3SR Tel: 0171 468 2290

They work with industry, commerce, training and educational organisations to make it easier for women to re-enter education, training and employment.

New Ways to Work

309 Upper Street, London N1 2TY Tel: 0171 226 4026

They help individuals, employers and organisations develop flexible working arrangements.

Richard Lovell is Chief Food Packer for Europa Manor, a company that designs and manufactures greenhouses. Negotiating the rapids, abseiling down cliff faces and designing rope bridges to cross gulleys couldn't be further removed from his daily grind. But he applied for an Outward Bound course via the company's Personal Development Scheme. Next stop Aberdyfi!

Richard acted as 'self-proclaimed chief bottom-washer' and enjoyed every minute.

'I was always the first to volunteer to have a go at anything. So in the end when they needed someone to leap off something, they just looked at me! I'd never done anything like it before. We went abseiling, kayaking, mountain climbing and on an assault course. And at various points we were set problems which we had to solve by making something – like a bridge – and then all of us use it. It was really exciting. The adrenalin was pumping, that's for sure!'

'We spent a night in a log cabin with no electricity, building a fire to cook on. And when we were kayaking we had to improvise with our jacket to make a sail, as if we'd lost our oars. It kept you thinking all the time, exercising the brain as well as the body. We built up a trust in each other and learned to work as a team. And there was a good sense of achievement at the end.'

So what plans has Richard for future courses?

'I would really like to try something harder. Maybe parachute jumping?!'

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Self EMPLOYMENT

WHAT'S INVOLVED

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Self EMPLOYMENT

WHAT'S INVOLVED

Have you been thinking of setting up your own business? Or has a hobby developed to a point where you want to take it further?

If it works out, being your own boss can be satisfying and rewarding. But it does need determination. And planning!

Even if things run smoothly, self employment is likely to mean:

- **long hours**
- **financial insecurity**
- **living with risk**
- **carrying the can – every time**
- **isolation**

Before you take the plunge into self employment, you need to plan carefully and work out the pros and cons.

Answer these questions first:

- **What are you going to do? Make sure there's a gap in the market by doing some research into similar businesses**
- **How are you going to organise it?**
- **How are you going to finance it?**
- **Are you committed and determined enough to make a go of it?**

There's plenty of advice and training around to help you – not just to set up your business but also to keep you and your staff up-to-date on the latest developments. Take advantage what's advice and training available.

It could make all the difference!

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS FIRST

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? MAKE SURE THERE'S A GAP IN THE MARKET BY DOING SOME RESEARCH INTO SIMILAR BUSINESSES

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO ORGANISE IT?

HOW ARE YOU GOING TO FINANCE IT?

ARE YOU COMMITTED AND DETERMINED ENOUGH TO MAKE A GO OF IT?

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Business in the Community,
44 Baker Street,
London W1M 1DH

Tel: 0171 224 1600

Business in the Community,
BP Oil UK Ltd
Airport Road West
Belfast BT3 9EA

Tel: 01232 739639

Scottish Business
in the Community
Romano House
43 Station Road
Corstorphine
Edinburgh EH12 7AF

Tel: 0131 334 9876

LEDU
Upper Galwally, Belfast,
Northern Ireland BT8 4TB

Tel: 01232 491031

DTI Publications
Admail 528,
London SW1W 8YT

Advice and support for self employment – where to look

After you've worked out your business idea and done some research into the competition, it's best to go and talk to an expert.

Ask at your TEC/LEC or Jobcentre for details of advisers who can help. And look in your local press. Some TECs and LECs may even offer financial assistance to get your business off the ground.

Local Enterprise Agencies/Trusts

Local Enterprise Agencies/Trusts offer free start-up advice and counselling. Contact the following addresses for information on your nearest local agency.

Business in the Community, 44 Baker Street, London W1M 1DH Tel: 0171 224 1600
or
Business in the Community, BP Oil UK Ltd, Airport Road West, Belfast BT3 9EA Tel: 01232 739639

Scottish Business in the Community

Scottish Business in the Community will put you in touch with your Local Enterprise Trust in Scotland. The Trusts give free advice on all aspects of starting a business, including the preparation of a business plan, identifying training needs, or sources of finance. Your business counsellor will help you find the right path to business success.

Contact them at:
Scottish Business in the Community
Romano House, 43 Station Road, Corstorphine, Edinburgh EH12 7AF Tel: 0131 334 9876

LEDU – The Small Business Agency

LEDU – The Small Business Agency offers advice in Northern Ireland.

Contact them at:

LEDU, Upper Galwally, Belfast, Northern Ireland BT8 4TB

Tel: 01232 491031

The Small Firms and Business Links Division

The Small Firms and Business Links Division of the DTI produces several booklets to help small firms survive and grow. Titles are free and include Setting up in Business – a guide to regulatory requirements, and Make the cash flow.

You can order them from:

DTI Publications, Admail 528, London SW1W 8YT

Business Link

Business Links were set up to provide a one-stop shop for business support.

They can help businesses decide what support they need and provide a tailored package to make it easy for them to get specialist help.

ASK YOUR TEC OR LEC FOR DETAILS IN YOUR AREA

Enterprise Training

Enterprise Training can be offered to unemployed people between 18 and 63 who want to set up their own business. It comes under the Training for Work banner. It provides basic business training, which may include practical assignments, counselling and skills training. 'Enterprise rehearsals' may also be used to give you a chance to test out your business idea.

Business Start Up

You'll have so much paperwork to tackle if you set up on your own. There's income tax, National Insurance, employers' liability insurance, the Unified Business Rate, VAT, operators' licences, planning permission, approval from the local council .... and there's more!

It's worth finding out about the rules and regulations before you start. It will also help to know about basic business processes.

All TECs and LECs offer advice and training to people setting up in business. Most organise a package of workshops and seminars providing basic business training. You may be eligible even if you're in work at the moment or have recently started working for yourself.

TECs and LECs also provide financial support schemes to unemployed people who want to go into business. Each TEC/LEC sets its own conditions for qualifying for assistance. But you'll need to have been unemployed for six weeks before you apply for support and you must be starting a new business over which you have overall control.

Ask your TEC or LEC for details

And don't underestimate your ready-made network of support

Family, friends and colleagues can be more helpful than you'd give them credit for. Just talking through an idea or problem can unravel any tangles.

There may also be a local Small Business Club near you, where self employed people meet to share ideas, experiences and support. The local Chamber of Commerce may be able to give you details.

Finding the finance

It's important to get the finance right. When businesses go under, it's usually money that's at the heart of the problem.

So it's especially important when you're starting up to make sure that your venture has sufficient backing.

You'll need to prepare a business plan which will show costings and a forecast of how your venture will develop, which you can present to prospective backers – such as the bank! Be realistic about how much your business will earn and how much you will need to allow for costs such as heating, electricity, marketing, travel and stationery – as well as the amount you'll need to take out to live on.

The high street banks have services aimed especially at people setting up in business and at those who have been trading for a short time. Make an appointment to talk to an adviser or ask your TEC or LEC for details of help available locally.

TAKING A PERSONAL INVENTORY?

Here is a list of characteristics which help in business. If you see yourself as an entrepreneur try rating yourself for each of the qualities. If you come to the conclusion that you don't match this profile, perhaps you ought to reconsider.

ANSWER HONESTLY	ALWAYS	MOST OF THE TIME	SOME OF THE TIME	RARELY
I've got the physical energy to keep working long hours if necessary				
I believe in my own abilities				
I can make long-term commitments and work towards distant goals				
I'm motivated by the prospect of making money				
I like difficult tasks to solve				
I can set myself challenging but achievable goals				
I analyse situations and come up with solutions to problems				
I'll take calculated risks				
If I make mistakes I can learn from them				
I know when to seek advice				
I can cope with stress				
I can handle uncertain situations				
I set myself high standards and make sure I meet them				
I think on my feet in response to situations				
I have a high degree of commitment to any project I get involved with				
I take personal responsibility for tasks I take on				
I set out to find creative and innovative solutions to problems				
I can motivate others				
I've got good management skills				
I'm a good organiser				
I can be assertive without being aggressive				
I'm a positive thinker				

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Where NEXT?

BOOKS TO READ AND USEFUL ADDRESSES

YOU'VE READ THROUGH THIS BOOKLET – NOW MAKE A NOTE OF WHAT YOU WANT TO DO NEXT TO START THE BALL ROLLING.

IT'S UP TO YOU – AND, STEP BY STEP, IT'S EASY!

REMEMBER, LEARNING'S NOT JUST FOR CHILDHOOD – IT'S FOR LIFE.

AND IT MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD! TAKE THE CHANCE .... NOW!

ACTION PLAN WHAT AM I GOING TO DO FIRST?

- ___ SEEK FURTHER ADVICE
- ___ WORK OUT MY GOALS
- ___ READ SOME OF THE BOOKS SUGGESTED
- ___ TALK TO SOME PEOPLE TO SEE WHAT THEY THINK
- ___ PLAN TO LEARN WITH SOME FRIENDS OR COLLEAGUES
- ___ FIND OUT ABOUT COURSES
- ___ PUT THE KETTLE ON AND THINK SOME MORE?

COMPLETE THESE SENTENCES:

Over the next year I want to achieve .....

I'm going to start by .....

By next weekend, I will have contacted .....

Where NEXT?

BOOKS TO READ AND USEFUL ADDRESSES

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Useful Reading

If you're planning to get back into education or training, it's useful to do some research into what's available. The local library or careers office are good places to start – see whether they have any copies of the books listed here. Some of them are free, some not. Check with the publisher.

Second Chances – the guide to adult education and training opportunities

A comprehensive directory or options and opportunities throughout the UK.

Available from:

Careers and Occupational Information Centre, PO Box 298A, Thames Ditton, Surrey KT7 0ZS Tel: 0181 957 5030

Coming Back to Education

A handbook for adults.

Available from:

BIBLIOS, Star Road, Partridge Green, West Sussex RH13 8LD Tel: 01403 710851

Register of Recognised Access Courses to Higher Education

A comprehensive register on CD-Rom providing brief details of kitemarked Access courses throughout the UK. Available in libraries and guidance centres and from:

ECCTIS 2000, Oriel House, Oriel Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 1XP Tel: 01242 252627

Returning to Learning

Available from:

Addison Wesley Longman, Edinburgh Gate, Harlow, Essex CM20 2JE Tel: 01279 623623

Returning for Work – a guide for lone parents

Available from:

National Council for One Parent Families, 255 Kentish Town Road, London NW5 2LX Tel: 0171 267 1361

Working Parents' Handbook

Available from:

Parents At Work, 45 Beech Street, London EC2Y 8AD Tel: 0171 628 3565

British Qualifications

A comprehensive guide to the maze of scholastic and trade examinations.

Available from:

Kogan Page, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN Tel: 0171 278 0433

Address File

Useful organisations not already mentioned

Workers' Education Association (WEA)

WEA, Temple House, 17 Victoria Park Square, London E2 9PB Tel: 0181 983 1515

A voluntary body providing education and training for adults.

WEA Scotland

Riddles Court, 322 Lawnmarket, Edinburgh EH1 2PG
Tel: 0131 226 3456

European Commission

8 Storey's Gate, London SW1P 3AT
Tel: 0171 973 1992

Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges

10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN
Tel: 0171 389 4004

The European Social Fund (ESF) in Great Britain aims to improve employment opportunities by contributing towards the running costs of vocational training, guidance and counselling, employment support projects and job creation measures.

Around £1.3bn of ESF money will be available to part fund projects in Great Britain over the next 3 years.

The ESF contributed about £530 million to projects that ran in Great Britain in 1995.

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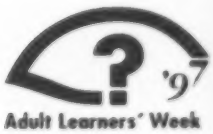
Further copies of this magazine are available free of charge from Cambertown Ltd (01709 888688)



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